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ried industry. They despatch the household business with which they are daily overwhelmed, with alacrity and cheerfulness. It is their task to make clothes for their husbands and children; to fetch eatable roots, and various fruits from the woods; to gather the alfaroba, grind it, and convert it into drink, and to get water and wood for the daily consumption of the family. A ridiculous custom is in use amongst the Abipones, of making the most aged woman in the horde provide water for all domestic purposes. Though the river may be close at hand, the water is always fetched in large pitchers on horseback, and the same method is observed in getting wood for fuel. You will never hear one of these women complain of fatigue, however many cares she may have to employ her mind. A noble Spaniard had a captive Abiponian woman in his service many years, and he assured me that she was more useful and valuable to him than three other servants, because she anticipated his orders, and did her business seasonably, accurately, and quickly. They justly claim the epithet of the *devout female sex*. No sooner do they hear the sound of the bell than they all fly to hear the Christian religion explained, and listen to the preacher with attentive ears. They highly approve the law of Christ, because by it no husband is allowed to put

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away his wife, or to marry more than one. For this reason they are extremely anxious to have themselves and their husbands baptized, that they may be rendered more certain of the perpetuity of their marriage. This must be understood only of the younger women; for the old ones, who are obstinate adherers to their ancient superstitions, and priestesses of the savage rites, strongly oppose the Christian religion, foreseeing that if it were embraced by the whole Abiponian nation, they should lose their authority, and become the scorn and the derision of all. The young men amongst the Abipones, as well as the old women, greatly withstood the progress of religion; for, burning with the desire of military glory and of booty, they are excessively fond of cutting off the heads of the Spaniards, and plundering their waggons and estates, which they know to be forbidden by the law of God. Hence, they had rather adhere to the institutes of their ancestors, and traverse the country on swift horses, than listen to the words of a priest within the walls of a church. If it depended upon the old men and the young women alone, the whole nation would long since have embraced our religion.

Honourable mention has been frequently made by me of the chastity of the Abiponian women:

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injuries is refreshed in the minds of the intoxicated guests, the relations fiercely avenge the dishonour done to the repudiated wife. Often, too, women just cast off by one man are immediately married by another. I have observed elsewhere that the younger women highly approve the law of Christ, and are anxious that themselves and their husbands should be baptized, because the perpetuity of their marriage is thereby secured, and their husbands prevented from changing or increasing the number of their wives. This licence of divorce produces, as I have already related, bloody murders of children, and the incredible diminution of the whole nation.

You will find many things worthy of reprehension, but at the same time not a few deserving of praise, in the married state of the Abipones. I will inform you of those most worthy of mention. Though the paternal indulgence of the Roman pontiffs makes the first and second degrees of relationship alone a bar to the marriage of the Indians, yet the Abipones, instructed by nature and the example of their ancestors, abhor the very thought of marrying any one related to them by the most distant tie of relationship. Long experience has convinced me, that the respect to consanguinity, by which they are deterred from marrying into their own families,